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Report of the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women on its twentieth session

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I. Matters brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council

1. At its twentieth session, the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) approved the feasibility study on the Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (GAINS) as presented in document INSTRAW/BT/2000/R.3 and as amended in terms of the budget, phasing and implementation and recommended that the Institute grant priority to its implementation.

2. The Board decided that:

(a) INSTRAW should concentrate on the launching of GAINS and defer all thematic research projects except the two which were in their final stages of completion, namely, the Engendering the Political Agenda and the Temporary Labour Migration of Women;

(b) The Director should identify outputs for GAINS, on the basis of the phased budget presented to the Board;

(c) The Director of INSTRAW should also be given the flexibility to use some of the core funds for phase I of the GAINS project, without jeopardizing the functioning of the Institute. The Director is, however, urged to continue the fund-raising efforts to ensure the quick implementation of all phases of the project.

3. The Board requested the United Nations Controller, as resources become available, to release additional funds over the approved operational budget for the year 2000 to the Director, to enable her to start up the GAINS project.

4. The existing staff at INSTRAW should be trained in the use of information and communication technologies for the operation of GAINS.

5. The Board reiterated its appeal to the United Nations Secretariat to have the programme support costs waived for the past three years; and further requested that the said waiver be extended to the current year.

6. The Board sought to have a well-substantiated clarification on the conflicting financial information being provided by the Office of the Controller and the United Nations external auditors, regarding the measures taken to "correct the administrative anomalies noted in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit", as noted in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 54/140.

7. The Board requested an external audit of the INSTRAW Trust Fund for the period 1994-1999.

8. The Board also requested that quarterly certified financial statements on the INSTRAW Trust Fund be provided to the Director and the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW by the Office of the Controller.

9. The Board further requested regular audited accounts of the Trust Fund.

10. While greatly appreciating the support given to INSTRAW so far, the Board urged the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to intensify this collaboration by supporting the Director in all her fund-raising efforts and other activities to revitalize INSTRAW.

11. Given the great concern about the Institute's current financial crisis, the Board noted with great appreciation the first substantial cash contributions to GAINS and INSTRAW from the Government of Spain. The Board also noted with appreciation the payment of pledges received from Colombia, Cyprus, Mexico, Morocco and South Africa. The Board noted with special appreciation the continuing support and in-kind contributions of the host country, the Dominican Republic.

II. Pending matters and progress report on the activities of INSTRAW for 1999

12. At its first meeting, under agenda item 4, the Board reviewed the pending matter of the "Friends of INSTRAW" and the progress report on the activities of INSTRAW for 1999. The Board had before it documents INSTRAW/BT/2000/CRP.1 and INSTRAW/BT/2000/R.2/Rev.1.

13. The Director of INSTRAW introduced the agenda item by presenting document INSTRAW/BT/2000/CRP.1 on "Friends of INSTRAW". She gave a brief description of the "Friends of INSTRAW" concept, which was initially proposed during the nineteenth session of the Board of Trustees. She referred to the underlying idea behind this concept, which was to give visibility as well as

financial and political support to the Institute's work. She brought to the Board's attention the three models proposed in the document, namely: (a) eminent individuals who would act as "ambassadors of good will" for INSTRAW; (b) individuals who were formerly associated with INSTRAW and who would lobby for the Institute on an individual and informal basis; and (c) associations or councils at the national level. As an example of a national council working for the Institute, she referred to the National Council for Research on Women, the current focal point of INSTRAW in the United States of America, which has its own network of 84 research organizations in the United States. The Director of the Council has expressed interest in revitalizing its relationship as a council for INSTRAW, stating that a national council could assist the Institute in its fund-raising activities and that the relationship would also benefit their organization by giving them a global link to other research institutes worldwide. The Director also stated that it would be vital to obtain tax-exempt status for such national councils for the purposes of fund-raising.

14. One Board member agreed that it was important to reactivate such links with national councils. She stated that the second modality, focusing on individuals formerly associated with the Institute, would also be useful if those who had been and still were supportive of INSTRAW could be recruited. In that regard, she suggested that the Director should advise the Board of those individuals who she felt would be most relevant to approach.

15. Another Board member stated that the ideas on linkages under the "Friends of INSTRAW" proposal should be concretized. She added that focal points could give impulse to INSTRAW activities if they were kept properly informed of the Institute's work and that joint activities should be carried out to disseminate INSTRAW methodologies. The resulting impact at the national level would be important. She also noted the need for INSTRAW to maintain and disseminate up-to-date information through its web site.

16. Emphasizing the importance of raising the visibility of INSTRAW, one Board member mentioned that the Institute's work was not well known in the European region. She noted that, in many cases, European institutions were duplicating work already done by INSTRAW. She suggested that a network foundation for INSTRAW should be organized in Europe to promote gender issues, to represent the Institute in regional and international conferences and to make important contacts in the region. The Board member expressed her willingness to set up such a foundation and offered her assistance towards that end.

17. The Board members agreed that decisive decisions should be made during the course of the meeting in relation to the three models proposed. They recognized that the staff of INSTRAW would be facing additional work should they attempt to operationalize all three models. Therefore, they considered that the Board should prioritize the proposed models. It was generally considered that the establishment of national councils would be very important and that the Institute should continue its dialogue with the National Council for Research on Women. Individual Board members would discuss further with the Director their respective suggestions for establishing councils for the European region and the Arab countries as well as assisting the Institute to establish links with existing research institutions and networks.

18. In order to facilitate raising the profile of INSTRAW, the President of the Board suggested that Board members should keep the Institute informed of the various meetings they would be attending and new research data available at the national and regional levels. Likewise, she requested that the Institute keep the Board members informed of important meetings taking place in their countries or regions.

19. The Director then brought to the Board's attention the implementation of the programme of work for 1999 (INSTRAW/BT/2000/R.2/Rev.1). She highlighted the fact that, in recent years, INSTRAW had suffered a severe financial crisis and during the preceding year a lack of leadership for six months. The last few months of 1999 had been characterized by efforts to stop or reverse the crises and pull INSTRAW back on its course. During the biennium, stringent cost-reduction measures had been taken, such as the closing of the printing shop, reduction of staff, closing of the liaison office at United Nations Headquarters and re-phasing of the programme of work. She mentioned that, in May 1999, the Board of Trustees had developed a position paper which was presented to the Economic and Social Council, with a resulting resolution in which the Council recommended that INSTRAW should develop a new vision and that its work should be oriented towards the utilization of new information and communication technologies.

20. The Director emphasized that, during the period under discussion, many efforts had been made to regain the confidence of Member States and donor countries, particularly the European Union. Briefings had been given to other Governments and letters had been sent to Board members and focal points requesting them to lobby with their Governments.

21. The Director also informed the Board in detail about her efforts in fund-raising, which included holding several meetings with Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York and other international organizations.

22. In respect of the programme of work of INSTRAW, the Director reported that, despite the difficulties she had just outlined, the Institute had produced the following: three studies on engendering the political agenda, (Dominican Republic, Romania, South Africa), the results of which had been presented at an expert group meeting held in Romania on 2 and 3 September 1999; and two studies, in conjunction with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), on temporary labour migration of women (Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), the results of which had been presented at a joint INSTRAW/IOM expert group meeting held in Geneva on 30 and 31 August 1999. The case studies from both the Engendering the Political Agenda and Temporary Labour Migration programmes would be published with the kind assistance of the United Nations Publications Service and were projected to be launched at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in June 2000. An international non-governmental organization (NGO), "Global Action for Ageing", had, in March 2000, launched the INSTRAW book entitled *Ageing in a Gendered World: Women's Issues and Identities* in New York.

23. In the area of training, the Director reported that a training workshop on statistics and indicators on gender issues had been held in Mongolia in May 1999 in conjunction with the Ministry of External Relations of Mongolia.

24. In discussing the report, one Board member noted that she had seen and highly appreciated the results of the Engendering the Political Agenda project and recommended that the expert group meeting results should be sent to all international women's organizations. She also made reference to the project on Women Networking for Conflict Resolution and pointed out that a new Stability Pact for Women in the Balkan Area had been established in Europe, and that she would obtain details on that Pact and later inform INSTRAW. Another Board member inquired on the possibility of relating the studies carried out under that project to the situation of women in Kosovo and East Timor. Another Board member inquired why similar studies were not carried out in Africa, where women faced very similar conflict situations. The President answered both questions by explaining that funding restrictions made it necessary to limit the scope of projects, as evidenced in the strategic plan adopted at the Board's nineteenth session (INSTRAW/BT/1999/R.4), and that the conflict project was intended as a methodological model which could later be applied in other countries.

25. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General suggested that, before INSTRAW undertook further activities under the theme of conflict resolution, it should look at what the other United Nations agencies were doing in that area with the objective of establishing future collaboration. She further pointed out that the Board should bear in mind that the progress report dealt with the former method of work of the Institute. Under the new structure and working method, all research and training activities would have to be funded separately. Therefore, all proposed research and training projects would need to have their own separate funding.

26. The President of the Board noted that GAINS would be the key project for the Institute and that it would have to be made clear that funds donated for its implementation would need to be earmarked separately from those given for core activities. It was clarified that core activities represented all the activities associated with the running of the Institute, with the exception of the actual research and training activities, which were to be considered projects.

III. New structure and working method of INSTRAW

27. At its second and third meetings, the Board considered the new structure and working method of INSTRAW under agenda item 5. The Board had before it documents INSTRAW/BT/2000/R.3, INSTRAW/BT/2000/R.4, INSTRAW/BT/2000/R.4/Corr.1, INSTRAW/BT/2000/CRP.2 and INSTRAW/BT/2000/CRP.2/Add.1.

28. The Director presented documents INSTRAW/BT/2000/CRP.2 and INSTRAW/BT/2000/CRP.2/Add.1 on focal points. The Director noted that, given the new working method of INSTRAW based on GAINS, focal points would need to play a new and important role as outreach and feedback nodes at the national and regional levels. Taking into consideration that new role, INSTRAW focal points had been requested to confirm their desire to renew their status. Thirteen focal points responded, reiterating their interest in operating as focal points of INSTRAW under its new working framework.

29. The Director then proposed a new framework for the operations of the INSTRAW network of focal points which included not only new functions but new criteria and a new procedure for selection. In that regard, the Board was asked to consider approving the new approach, which proposed that focal points should be selected on the basis of their information and communications technologies (ICT) facilities and expertise, outreach/feedback capacity and gender focus. The new approach also proposed that, in addition to applications being channelled through Permanent Missions, they might also be submitted directly to the Institute. The Director noted that, in order to expedite the selection procedure, the Institute would periodically submit to the Bureau of the Board of Trustees screened applications for approval on behalf of the Board.

30. Following the presentation by the Director, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General noted that new terms of reference would need to be provided to focal points so that they were clear on their new functions and on what to expect from INSTRAW and GAINS. She also informed the Board that WomenAction 2000 had a large LISTSERVE of NGOs which could be of use to INSTRAW as it expanded its network of focal points. Several Board members also offered to provide INSTRAW with lists of regional and subregional networks to which INSTRAW could link.

31. The Director clarified the difference in the roles of the Friends of INSTRAW and the focal points. She explained that the Friends of INSTRAW would act mostly in areas of fund-raising, promotion and raising the visibility of INSTRAW, while focal points would operate as outreach nodes of the GAINS system. After receiving some additional clarifications, the Board approved the new framework for the operations of the INSTRAW network of focal points and confirmed the status of the 13 focal points that applied for renewal.

32. Turning the Board's attention to the feasibility study of GAINS, the Director emphasized the relevance of GAINS at a time when rapid globalization and technological change presented new opportunities, challenges and risks for women. One major problem, which GAINS would help to address, was the widening gender gap in terms of access and use of these new technologies.

33. The Director then gave a PowerPoint® presentation on GAINS in terms of its role, objectives, structure, planned activities, expected outputs and the general importance of the services. She informed the Board that, by providing a web-based global mechanism for knowledge generation, management and dissemination, GAINS would empower women and bring their views and concerns closer to decision-making processes. The Director continued by informing the Board that the main services of GAINS included: interactive databases, collaborative research consultation and dialogue facilities, training and capacity-building, news services and on-line publishing. In addition, GAINS would establish a global electronic platform of researchers and trainers that would play a key role in identifying new trends and challenges to women's advancement and gender equality and in the production of new knowledge which would feed back into the United Nations policy processes as well as into grass-roots action. Likewise, GAINS would work through a network of regional and national focal points that would function as outreach and feedback nodes. GAINS would not only contain a database on gender-related training resources but also facilities for distance learning and on-line multimedia courses to build capacity in the use of ICTs and in other areas. She further elaborated on the establishment of a Consultation Network of Key Stakeholders comprised of policy makers, practitioners, researchers, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, the media and the private sector. This network would: (a) form task forces on specific critical issues for consultation and integration of research findings into policy recommendations and actions; (b) provide opportunities for interface between researchers and policy makers, NGOs and other stakeholders; and (c) actively promote research findings and recommendations to policy-making bodies through advocacy organizations. In conclusion, she reiterated

that GAINS, as a method of harnessing the transformative power of ICTs could easily stimulate a qualitative leap forward for women into the twenty-first century. Not only would GAINS provide a dedicated virtual workshop on research and training, it would facilitate women's entrance into the information society. GAINS would also support women to become global players and widen their involvement in decision-making at all levels. In that respect, GAINS would allow women to gain lost ground.

34. Board members concurred that GAINS was not only a useful tool for the international gender and development community, but also the means of revitalizing the Institute. In that regard, it was agreed that INSTRAW should give priority to GAINS and that the Director should present a time-frame for the implementation of GAINS indicating the various stages and corresponding costs and outputs.

35. Some Board members requested clarification as to whether GAINS was a special project or the new methodology of INSTRAW for research and training and whether GAINS would be financed and managed separately from the Institute's core budget. Many Board members expressed concern over that matter and requested that GAINS hence should be operationalized, at least during the transition period, using the available resource base of INSTRAW. Therefore, the Board recommended that, as the earmarked funds were provided to the Trust Fund, the need for flexibility should be taken into consideration by the contributing countries.

36. The launching of a prototype of GAINS at the forthcoming twenty-third special session of the General Assembly was recognized by the Board members as a good opportunity to present GAINS to Member States and other potential donors. The Director informed the Board that preparations for that presentation were under way through the initial elaboration of the web site. In that effort, INSTRAW was seeking collaborative support from other United Nations entities for the preparation of the database component of the site.

37. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as several Board members, highlighted the importance of illustrating how GAINS would serve the different stakeholders, in particular grass-roots women. The representative of the regional commissions noted that GAINS should not only establish networks of researchers but also networks to promote dialogue between NGOs and national machineries. He continued by adding that thematic networks should be established between countries with similar problems, as well as regional ones.

38. Several Board members inquired as to how GAINS would ensure the access of its services to stakeholders that did not have the technological requirements, particularly in developing countries. In that regard, the Director noted that INSTRAW was developing a network of focal points that would serve as outreach and feedback nodes. She suggested that the issue could be discussed more thoroughly when presenting the document INSTRAW/BT/2000/CRP.2 on focal points. She also noted that ICT centres such as those established by the United Nations Development Programme in numerous countries, could be used, and hence GAINS could work through already established systems.

39. In introducing the proposed operational budget for 2000, the Director noted that, during the 1999 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, many Member States had demonstrated their preference in effecting contributions through alternative modalities, for example, earmarked contributions for specific programme activities. She added that that new funding approach had presented difficulties for INSTRAW in the preparation of its operational budget for 2000, in view of the fact that the flow and level of contributions to be received could not be estimated and financial projections could not be made. She explained further that the proposed budget for 2000 took into account the funds currently available in the Trust Fund as of 31 December 1999, amounts pledged for the year 2000 and contributions which were still outstanding from previous bienniums. On the basis of those resources, the management prepared and submitted to the Controller an operational budget amounting to US$ 870,500. The Controller had agreed to that budget level, which could be adjusted as additional resources entered the Trust Fund.

40. The Director further noted that the budget under review complied with the recommendations of Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/54 of 29 July 1999, in which the Council requested that INSTRAW core staff should be constituted of a small number of persons. In doing so, the budget made provision for the minimal staffing configuration possible for the carrying out of core operations of the

Institute's new working method, which included the servicing and coordination of INSTRAW special projects. Likewise, and in view of its limited resources, only those financial provisions required for the basic functioning of the Institute had been budgeted.

41. Some Board members expressed concern with the continuous financial crisis that INSTRAW had been confronting for years and recalled that, during its nineteenth session, the Board had discussed the matter thoroughly and had made specific recommendations for addressing the issue. In that regard, they requested information regarding the follow-up actions of INSTRAW to those recommendations.

42. One Board member specifically referred to the recommendation made by the Board at its nineteenth session (see E/1999/57, para. 3) to request that the United Nations Secretariat waive the programme support cost charged to the INSTRAW Trust Fund for the period 1998-1999 and onward until such time as the Institute's financial base was fortified. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General explained that initial consultations had been carried out by the Executive Office of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, but that to date no official approval of the waiver had been issued. She further offered to follow up the matter.

43. Another Board member requested information as to whether the administrative anomalies noted by the evaluation conducted by the Joint Inspection Unit on INSTRAW (A/54/156-E/1999/102) had been corrected and if corresponding payments had reverted to the INSTRAW Trust Fund. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General indicated that, in December 1999, the Controller had informed INSTRAW that partial payments had been made and that the remaining amount would be paid once the external auditors had made available the outcome of their review on the matter. One Board member inquired whether INSTRAW management had accounting records indicating when the reimbursement had actually been made. The acting Administrative Officer replied that such accounting records were not available at INSTRAW headquarters but could be requested from the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. The Director pointed out that the Management Letter from the United Nations Board of External Auditors to INSTRAW in December 1999 on the audit they had conducted on the Institute for the period 1 January 1998 to 30 June 1999 indicated that appropriate adjustments to the amount of US$ 326,595 should be effected to the INSTRAW Trust Fund. At the request of the Board, copies of those letters were made available. The Board recommended that, given the ambiguity of the information provided by the Office of the United Nations Controller and the Board of External Auditors, regular audited accounting of the Trust Fund should be provided to the Board. Furthermore, the Board decided to request that an external audit should be conducted on the Institute's Trust Fund for the period 1994 to 1999.

44. Following that discussion, the Board expressed concern with the Institute's lack of access to the financial statements and audited accounts of its Trust Fund. It requested that the Board and the Director should be provided with quarterly financial statements and regular audited accounts of the Trust Fund.

45. Another Board member noted that any outstanding payments owed to INSTRAW should be made available as a means of facilitating the initial implementation of GAINS. In that regard, she noted that payment of the outstanding amounts owed by the host country would be highly recommendable. The representative of the host country noted that, although some contributions remained outstanding, the host country made regular in-kind contributions through the provision of services (such as electricity and security) which represented a significant item for the operations of the INSTRAW headquarters. She went on to say that, given the country's currently limited resources, it would be very difficult for the Government to make a full payment.

46. The Director then presented the financial requirements for the initial implementation of GAINS. She provided, for the consideration of the Board, a phased tentative budget for year one, reflecting the budget provided in the feasibility study, to be implemented in two phases. The first phase, to be carried out from April to September 2000, would establish the basic design and architecture of GAINS and initiate the database. The second phase, to be implemented from October 2000 to March 2001, would consist of content development of the system. Pending availability of funds for 2001, that phase would continue in the new year focusing on the delivery of specific outputs. For phase one and two, the estimated cost was $565,000. The third phase would begin in April 2001, providing incorporation of additional functionality, production of collaborative research

outputs and interactive on-line training or distance learning. Those three phases would complete the cycle for year one.

47. For phase one and part of phase two (until the end of year 2000), the estimated cost would be approximately $400,000. That amount did not include the provision of a full complement of INSTRAW resources and services to GAINS. The Director of INSTRAW proposed and the Board approved that the Institute should make GAINS its only project for the transition period of year one. That would include the assignment of a full-time INSTRAW professional staff member to GAINS, the focus of the work of her office as well as the coverage of all overhead costs and support services that would be provided to GAINS. It should also be noted that the required amount of $400,000 for 2000 did not include various financial and in-kind contributions which were currently being negotiated and, in some instances, had already been committed, as for example the services of a technical expert from the United Nations Development Programme to assist in the building of the web site.

48. After thorough review of the feasibility study on GAINS, which had been carried out by an independent consulting firm, the Board welcomed the concept and components of GAINS. It was suggested and agreed that, as GAINS was implemented, there would be a need to organize seminars for focal points, particularly in the developing countries, to train them in the use and dissemination of GAINS to grass-roots women. That strategy would enable INSTRAW to reach technologically deprived women, and to identify their specific needs in terms of what GAINS could offer. The Board then approved the feasibility study on GAINS as presented in document INSTRAW/BT/2000/R.3, with amendments in terms of its budget, phasing and implementation. The Board also agreed that the Director should be given the flexibility to adjust the approved budget within the level of resources approved for 2000. It further decided that, given the need for INSTRAW to focus on GAINS, all special projects should be deferred until a later date.

IV. Other issues of relevance to the functioning of INSTRAW

49. At its fourth meeting, the Board considered, under agenda item 6, proposals for the establishment of councils or associations to promote INSTRAW and its work.

50. One Board member read out a proposal for the establishment of an association to be named the international council for INSTRAW with the following objectives: (a) to constitute an international network for the exchange and dissemination of gender-related information; (b) to give visibility to INSTRAW activities in the respective countries and regions of the members; (c) to promote the interests of INSTRAW by conducting parallel activities in the various regions; and (d) to contribute to the databases prepared by INSTRAW.

51. It was envisioned, she continued, that the council would be headquartered in a European country and be would associated with a most supportive former INSTRAW Board member. Such an arrangement would open new avenues of international cooperation for INSTRAW and would facilitate funding for INSTRAW projects. She pointed out that the association would, in a sense, be a "virtual" association as the members would network and coordinate their activities by e-mail. She added that the INSTRAW Director, two or three INSTRAW staff members and representatives of the Board could be invited to meetings of the association.

52. Another Board member suggested that perhaps the name INSTRAW should not appear in the title of the association since such an association would then not be eligible to receive funding from the European Union. She assured the Board members that such an association could promote INSTRAW and its activities and operate under a joint and shared budget with INSTRAW. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General pointed out that that arrangement could introduce difficulties in terms of allocation of funds and auditing. It was finally agreed that, in order to be eligible for funds from the European Union, the association would be called the European Council for the Advancement of Women and it would adopt the GAINS project, which it would implement together with INSTRAW. It was also agreed that similar associations could be set up in other regions to widen the support and funding for GAINS in the same way.

53. One Board member reiterated her personal commitment to the promotion of INSTRAW and requested from the Director a signed letter of recommendation and project proposals which she

would present at the next meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, of which her country was the current chair. She added that she would further promote INSTRAW in the European Union and assist in coordination at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in New York in June 2000. She mentioned that, as head of her country's delegation and Vice-President of the Francophone Women's Association, she would promote INSTRAW and GAINS in her official statements.

54. Another Board member suggested that a representative of INSTRAW should make a presentation on GAINS to the European Union and offered her assistance in securing the necessary funding from the European Union to cover travel expenses to Brussels.

55. Endorsing the idea of establishing regional associations to support INSTRAW, one Board member congratulated the Director and the staff on their efforts towards the creation of a worthwhile project of interest to women at all levels.

56. The representative of the host country announced that, although the Government of the Dominican Republic would not be able to provide a cash contribution to INSTRAW during the current year, the State Secretariat for Women had been able to secure a commitment for an in-kind contribution to the GAINS project of 10 computers and 1 server which would be provided to INSTRAW as soon as possible.

57. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General informed the Board that her Office had received a cheque from the Government of South Africa in the amount of US$ 15,780 as their annual contribution to INSTRAW. Similarly, the Institute had received confirmation of a first payment of US$ 58,760.96 of a total amount of US$ 147,887 pledged by the Government of Spain.

58. Turning the Board's attention to the upcoming twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General briefed the Board on the state of readiness of two documents prepared by the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, namely the Political Declaration and the outcome document on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.[1] She noted that it had been agreed that those NGOs which had not been present at the 1995 Conference in Beijing could be accredited to the twenty-third special session of the Assembly but that the deadline for applications was rapidly approaching. She suggested that those Board members wishing to register their organizations for accreditation should communicate with her Office by fax or e-mail as soon as possible. She recommended that Board members should urge their countries to send the highest level of representation in order to demonstrate the importance of women's issues. She further recommended that members should make their delegations and regional groups aware of the planned INSTRAW events at the twenty-third special session of the Assembly and perhaps suggest specific paragraphs to be added to the outcome document where INSTRAW, in addition to the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), constituting the three pillars for the advancement of women in the United Nations, could be specifically mentioned. Heads of delegation could also be encouraged to mention INSTRAW in their statements. INSTRAW could assist in such promotion efforts by preparing a brief document which Board members could circulate before and during the twenty-third special session of the Assembly.

59. The President of the Board thanked all the participants and expressed particular appreciation for the efforts of the Director to revitalize the Institute. She also thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her support and assistance and requested that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs support the Director in the performance of her functions, particularly those related to fund-raising. She thanked the Governments of the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Morocco, South Africa and Spain for the concrete contributions which they had made to INSTRAW.

60. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General thanked the President for the leadership she had provided to the meeting and stated that it was the first time, in her recollection, that a Board of Trustees had developed such a comprehensive and concrete follow-up plan of action during its session. She also thanked the host country and the Governments that had contributed to the Trust Fund. Finally, she commended the staff of INSTRAW highly for their hard work and dedication to the revitalization of the Institute.

61. The Director expressed her appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her assistance to and support for the Institute.

V. Organization of the session

A. Opening and duration

62. The twentieth session of the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW was held at INSTRAW headquarters in Santo Domingo from 4 to 6 April 2000. The Board held five meetings.

63. The session was opened by the President of the Board, Ms. Amaryllis Torres. She welcomed all the Board members and especially the new members, Ms. Ana Maria Braga da Cruz, Ms. Hanan El-Malki and Ms. Jane N. Mulemwa, the ex officio members, and the distinguished observers representing Member States.

64. In her opening remarks, the President briefly remarked that the new structure and working method of INSTRAW was the topic of the session. She continued by reminding the Board members that it is up to them to approve GAINS as a new modality of work for INSTRAW.

65. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in her opening remarks, welcomed participants and conveyed the wishes of the Secretary-General for a successful Board meeting. She expressed appreciation to the Director and the staff of INSTRAW for all the work accomplished during the preceding months, to the host country for its consistent and unreserved political support to the Institute's revitalization process and the informal commitments of the Dominican private sector to the implementation of the GAINS project. She also gave recognition to the support given to INSTRAW by Mr. Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs; Ms. Lynne Gallagher and Ms. Noreene Janus and colleagues for the GAINS feasibility study and to the contributions of Mr. Jean-Pierre Halbwachs, Controller, and Mr. Gian Piero Roz, Director of the Information Technology Services Division, Office of Central Support Services, and their teams, who also reviewed the GAINS proposal.

66. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General further commented on the GAINS project, which had been born out of close cooperation between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and INSTRAW. The GAINS project was considered feasible and of modest cost and had the support of an appropriate infrastructure provided by the host country. She further expressed hope that the Institute would continue with its revitalization process and that, with the support of donor countries and an appropriate fund-raising strategy, INSTRAW would obtain tangible results. She also expressed confidence in the GAINS project.

67. Referring to the financial situation of the Institute, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General expressed her expectation that the Board at its current session would make substantial progress in planning a strategy to recover outstanding pledges. She also pointed to the need to raise funds for developing a prototype of the GAINS system in order to show the delegations at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly what the GAINS system was capable of doing for women in developing countries.

68. In conclusion, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General pledged the best efforts of her Office, the members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and the Division for the Advancement of Women to assist INSTRAW with the launching of the prototype and other necessary support. She expressed confidence that the international community would find the GAINS project worthy and therefore would support the efforts of the Board and the Director to maintain and further enhance the momentum gained in the revitalization process.

69. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, Mr. Eduardo Latorre, welcomed the participants to the Board session and made special reference to the most important issue to be discussed at the meeting, the revitalization process of INSTRAW. He expressed the confidence of the host country in the Institute's work and in the new working structure that the Institute proposed to implement and expressed the hope that, with the GAINS project, the Institute would continue to promote gender issues, particularly at the level of new information technologies. He further made reference to the Cybernetics Park that the host country expected to inaugurate in August 2000 which would use the most advanced technology to support global telecommunications. Therefore, he informed the participants that both the Government and the private sector were investing in the infrastructure in order to

ensure that it was the most advanced possible. Concluding, he remarked that the synergy between that infrastructure and the new focus of INSTRAW was evident.

70. The Director of INSTRAW, Ms. Eleni Stamiris, welcomed all participants to headquarters of INSTRAW and to the twentieth session of the Board of Trustees, during which new developments concerning the future of INSTRAW were going to be discussed. She continued by enumerating the difficulties encountered by INSTRAW during the preceding year and the efforts made to save the Institute from closing. She further referred to the GAINS project, which should prove effective in disseminating gender issues through state-of-the-art electronic means. She expressed thanks to those who had encouraged and given support to INSTRAW, particularly to Ms. Angela King, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women; Mr. Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, the host country; Ms. Julia Tavares de Alvarez, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations, the Government of Spain for their financial commitment to the GAINS project; and to the INSTRAW staff that had worked tirelessly to keep the Institute alive.

B. Attendance

71. The following members of the Board attended the session: Esther Ashton (Bolivia), Zakia Bouaziz (Tunisia), Ana Maria Braga da Cruz (Portugal), Hanan El-Malki (Syrian Arab Republic), Jane N. Mulemwa (Uganda), Norica Nicolai (Romania), Mamosebi Theresia Pholo (Lesotho) and Amaryllis Torres (Philippines).

72. The following ex officio members of the Board also attended: the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Angela King, Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women; the representative of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Mr. Patrice Robineau, representing all the regional commissions; Ms. Gladys Gutierrez, the representative of the Dominican Republic, the host country; and the Director of INSTRAW.

73. Also attending the session were the representatives of the Santo Domingo office of the United Nations Children's Fund, the European Union, the Embassy of Spain in the Dominican Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

C. Election of officers

74. At its first meeting, in accordance with rule 7 of its rules of procedure, the Board elected the following officers by acclamation:

President:
Amaryllis Torres (Philippines)

Vice-President:
Esther Ashton (Bolivia)

Rapporteur:
Jane Mulemwa (Uganda)

75. The re-elected president thanked the members of the Board for her re-election and for the renewed confidence in her that the Board had shown. She noted that it was now more essential than ever for the Board to be closely involved with and supportive of the Institute in order to secure the functioning of GAINS. She reiterated that it was important to demonstrate at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly that INSTRAW had the ability to fulfil its mandate and meet the challenges that lay ahead.

D. Agenda

76. At its first meeting, the Board adopted its provisional agenda (INSTRAW/BT/2000/R.1/Rev.1) by consensus. The agenda read as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Election of officers.
4. Matters pending and progress report on the activities of INSTRAW for 1999.
5. New structure and working method of INSTRAW.
6. Other issues of relevance to the functioning of INSTRAW.
7. Adoption of the report.
8. Date and venue of next session.

9. Closure of the twentieth session of the Board of Trustees.

77. In regard to the organization of work, the President made various proposals related to the distribution of documents and indicated that interventions by Board members and other participants should be as concise as possible.

E. Adoption of the report of the Board on its twentieth session

78. At its fifth meeting, on 6 April 2000, the Board adopted the report on its twentieth session (INSTRAW/BT/2000/R.5 and Add.1-3), together with a working paper on matters to be brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council.

79. Prior to the closure of the twentieth session, the Board decided to target a date towards the last week of March or the first week of April 2001 for the holding of its twenty-first session.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-third Special Session, Supplement No. 2* (A/S-23/2).